

- I. Claims 26-41, drawn to peptides;
- II. Claims 42-50, drawn to methods of forming a carrier-conjugate complex, a conjugate complex and a vaccine comprising the conjugate.

The Examiner argued that because the claims of Groups I and II do not relate to a single inventive concept, restriction is proper. More specifically, the Examiner noted that because the claims of Group I relate to a peptide and the claims of Group II relate to a carrier-antigen complex, the subject matter of each of the groups of claims relate to structurally, biologically, and chemically different moieties that will produce different immune responses.

Applicants respectfully traverse the restriction requirement for the reasons that follow. However, in order to be fully responsive to the official action, Applicants elect the claims of Group I, drawn to peptides, for prosecution in this application.

The present invention relates to peptides derived from an IgA1 protease from *Neisseria* or a homologous sequence that can be used as a carrier for an antigen to elicit a T-cell dependent immune response with long persistence. The peptides provide T-cell epitopes which are necessary for generating an immunologic "memory" and therefore can be used as a carrier for all known immunoreactive molecules to produce conjugates which can be efficient vaccines.

Therefore, the common inventive link among all of the pending claims is the peptide. The critical feature of the claims of Group II is the use of the peptides of Group I in order to elicit a memory response and persistent protection. Therefore, the claims of Groups I and II are unified by a single inventive concept and should be examined in a single application.

Further, the MPEP provides that restriction is proper when the inventions are

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independent or distinct and the examination of the groups of claims together would impose a serious burden on the examiner. MPEP § 803. Applicants submit that the examination of the groups of claims in a single application would not impose a serious burden on the Examiner because a search of the conjugates of Group II would necessarily overlap with the search of the peptides of Group I. Therefore, because a thorough prior art search of the claims of Group I will uncover the prior art related to the claims of Group II, the imposition of a restriction requirement in the instant case would actually impose a greater burden on the PTO which will necessarily result in duplicative efforts by multiple PTO personnel. In order to avoid such waste, Applicants respectfully request that the restriction requirement be withdrawn and the claims be examined in a single application.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants submit that the restriction requirement should be withdrawn and all of the pending claims should be examined on the merits in a single application. Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the restriction requirement are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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